



We are not quite through with the series *Law and Gospel*, nor can we exhaust it. One of this week's articles and a few upcoming ones introduce a terminology that some have asked about: *altar and pulpit fellowship*. So, we pause to clarify this. The Director of Communications (Dr. T) calls on one of Lutheran Church–Canada teachers, Rev. Mark L. Smith to answer this:

Dr. T: *Altar and Pulpit Fellowship—what does that really mean?*

Rev. Smith: Christian fellowship is more than friendship or shared affiliation. It is *koinonia*, the communion and shared life created by God Himself. Through the Gospel, the Holy Spirit unites us to Christ and, in Him, to one another. As the apostle John writes, “our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3 ESV). This fellowship is God’s gift through His Son, who has reconciled us to the Father and made us fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God (Ephesians 2:13– 22). It is not something we build, but a gift God gives and sustains through His Word and Sacraments.

Altar and Pulpit Fellowship is the Church’s public confession that this unity in Christ and His teaching exists between congregations or church bodies. Because they confess the same Gospel and administer the Sacraments according to Christ’s institution (Augsburg Confession VII), their pastors may preach in one another’s pulpits and their members may receive Holy Communion at one another’s altars. Fellowship does not create agreement; agreement in the truth creates fellowship. For that reason, the Church receives this fellowship with gratitude and guards it carefully, so that her preaching and sacramental life may remain faithful to Christ and His Word.

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Keep tuning in to *the Conversations*, where we journey back to basics and have your questions answered.